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**STATEWIDE PAID SICK DAYS PROPOSAL GATHERING STEAM:
BETWEEN-SESSION TASK FORCE TO FINETUNE LEGISLATION**

Salem, Oregon (June 5, 2013) – Supporters packed a second hearing for HB 3390 in the House Committee on Rules this afternoon. Many people representing public health and family advocates, health providers, union members, domestic violence service providers, employers and business associations delivered written or personal testimony in favor of the proposed statewide paid sick days policy.

A strong case was made that a statewide solution is needed to address what is clearly a public health problem, an economic security problem, and a human rights problem all across Oregon. A number of employers made the additionally compelling case that it's good for business, too, because it prevents contagion that reduces productivity, reduces costly turnover, and boosts morale. The point that everybody benefits from paid sick days – employees, employers, clients, public health, our economy - was made personally from many angles.

During the hearing, Rules Committee Chair Chris Garrett charged Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward and Representative Jessica Vega Pederson, who both testified in support of the bill, with the job of chairing an interim work group with stakeholders to look in-depth at the issue and come back to the legislature with an amended bill.

Andrea Paluso, Executive Director of Family Forward Oregon and Director of the Everybody Benefits Coalition for Earned Sick Days, is pleased with the bill's progress this session and the raised awareness of the problem among state legislators, but blames special interest groups for blocking the bill from moving further this year:

“Nearly 600,000 working Oregonians – 48% of the state’s private-sector workforce – aren’t allowed to earn paid sick time while they work right now. The fact that this many Oregonians are forced to choose between caring for their own and their family’s health or earning a paycheck is a statewide problem that an increasing number of our state legislators understand and want to solve.

I look forward to working with them to forge a pathway toward a statewide paid sick days law as soon as possible. It’s unfortunate that so many Oregonians will have to continue working without a single paid sick day because certain special interests are content to keep them from accessing this basic workplace right.”

Hearing Testimony in Support of HB 3390-2

These statements from several of the bill's supporters (some testimony delivered in person, some in writing) convey the tenor and breadth of the testimony in favor of a statewide sick time policy:

Tamra Hart, owner of Crendo, a custom print and web design provider in Salem, shared a recent experience preventing contagion among employees and clients in her workplace:

"I just spent 4 days at home making sure I was not breathing on small children, pregnant moms, or any of the other folks who walk in the doors of my business. Yes, I had work to do that I should have been in the office doing -- but giving them my horrible cold would be a horribly selfish act. We need paid sick leave so our employees feel the same way...and so I don't catch yet another cold from someone's employee who didn't feel they could stay home."

Mark Kellenbeck, owner of BrainJoy, LLC in Medford and co-chair of the Main Street Alliance of Oregon, highlighted the return to his business on paid sick leave:

"The business return on paid sick leave is many fold: a healthier workforce on the whole, greater productivity, happier and healthier families who benefit from well parents, happier and healthier children who benefit from the personal care of parents when ill, a great sense of care and community in the workforce, loyal and appreciative employees. Paid sick leave makes sound business sense in every measure I can think of. Above all, to me it reflects small business' value of and for their employees."

Helen Bellanca, a family physician, sees first-hand what it looks like when her patients don't earn sick time strongly supports HB 3390:

"I saw many patients who had to choose between staying home with a sick child (or staying home because of their own illness) and keeping their job. There were several families who described needing to leave their children in unsafe situations (like with neighbors they were not sure they could trust) because the children were ill and could not go to daycare, but the parent could not take time off work."

"This proposal to offer paid sick leave is a strong step in the right direction. It says that we value the health and well-being of all our families. It says that we, as a state, want to ensure that all our residents are empowered to take care of themselves and their children without being financially burdened for it. It says that when we make decisions, we do our best to align those decisions with good public health practices."

Beth Kaye, Program Manager at the Oregon Public Health Institute (OPHI), describes how intertwined employer and employee health is, based on her *Wellness @ Work* program expertise:

"We are not two societies, employers distinct from employees; we are one. HB 3390 strikes the right balance between the legitimate health needs of an employee and the employer's interest in having a healthy, productive workforce it can count on."

Recent Oregon Research

* Access to Earned Sick Days in Oregon: <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/access-to-earned-sick-days-in-oregon>

* Valuing Good Health in Oregon: The Costs & Benefits Earned Sick Days:
<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/valuing-good-health-in-oregon-the-costs-and-benefits-of-earned-sick-days>

More from *Everybody Benefits – Oregon's Campaign for Paid Sick Days*:
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